

peal from the accusations brought against him in Jerusalem by his enemies.

Delivered with "certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion," Paul began his voyage. By the next day, when the ship touched at Sidon, he had become such good friends with his keeper that "Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself," the Christians of Sidon.

The first ship took them to Myra, a city of Lycia, where the centurion found a ship bound from Alexandria to Italy. The weather, unusually unfavorable, delayed them and finally drove them into Fair Havens, where they spent considerable time because the sailing was dangerous.

Paul came forward and warned the captain of the ship not to attempt the voyage which he had planned, predicting that it would result in damage to the ship and danger to their lives. The centurion, however, preferred to rely upon the judgment of the master and owner of the ship and decided to go to a haven of Crete for the winter.

PAUL'S NEW SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Soon after they started on their way a tempestuous wind arose and carried the ship before it. After an exciting experience of falling into quicksands and having to lighten the ship, they went so far as to cast out the tackle of the ship. When for several days the clouds had concealed both the stars and sun, and when those on board despaired, Paul again appeared and exhorted them to be of good cheer, saying unto them that the "angel of God whose I am and whom I serve" had appeared before him, saying, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

The storm continued until the fourteenth night, when they came near to land and the sailors cast out anchors and then conspired to leave the ship and save themselves. Here the text of our Talk for today begins at the most dramatic point of the adventure. It brings out the masterful character of Paul, and this outstanding fact compels a consideration of the reasons for Paul's confidence, Paul's calmness, Paul's command of the situation and Paul's care for his companions.

Paul's confidence was not a personal matter, although he was self-reliant and had in him those elements of leadership that would have made him a dominant character among any group, regardless of the line of work in which he was engaged. He was a leader when he went about persecuting the Christians; that leadership was still more pronounced after he had talked with Jesus on his way to Damascus at the time of his conversion.

It is sometimes said of a man that he has convictions but has them well under control. Not so with Paul. His convictions controlled him, but when he became a follower of Christ he found a new source of strength that made him adamant in trying positions.

DO YOU BELIEVE THE BIBLE?

In this case he had a vision—one of the heavenly visions which he so faithfully followed. The Angel of God assured him that he must be brought before Caesar and that God had given him "all them that sail with thee." Was Paul deceived? Or did he actually hear the voice of an angel and accept as true the information received?

We might as well meet the issue here, for it arises often in reading the Bible. Do you believe in the super-natural, or have you gone through the Bible and eliminated everything that you cannot explain? Have you risen to the Bible plane, or have you tried to bring the Bible down to your level? Is it inspired, or just the word of men? Have you accepted the Bible as the word of God and received it upon its own authority? If you believe the things recorded actually happened, you can understand Paul and his companions—you can understand Christ and his work.

If, on the contrary, you reject the super-natural, then the Bible becomes to you a book of fiction—worse still, you regard it as a false record, no longer binding on your conscience, but just a volume from which you select the passages that you like, as you would select them from the writings of a philosopher, a poet or a novelist.

In these Talks we offer passages from the Bible as words to be believed, not words to be emasculated by scepticism or whittled down by criticism or rejected by agnosticism or atheism. All that is said of Paul in the account of his sea adventure implies the absolute truth and sincerity of Paul in reporting what he saw and heard. It was Paul's belief in the reality of his vision and his unquestion-

ing reliance upon its accuracy and truthfulness that led him to do the things that are described.

THE MAJESTY OF FAITH

It was because of this confidence that he was calm. When he had thwarted the plot of the sailors to desert the ship, he called upon all to take refreshment. They had been fourteen days without food and he knew that deliverance was at hand. His words calmed them; he was calm himself and his calmness was contagious. He took the bread, gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and ate. "Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat."

What a scene! Here was a prisoner on his way to plead his cause before Caesar, rising, giant like, from out the group. He takes charge of the expedition, and two-hundred and seventy-five souls, including the centurion, captain of the ship, sailors and prisoners, are his guests. Why do they all obey? Because he is the one man who holds communion with God. He is the channel through which the commands of the Almighty are delivered to those on the ship. He had no knowledge of the sea or of the tasks of the sailor, but he knew God and trusted Him. He heard, and he obeyed; and there was such a majesty about his faith that no one dared oppose him; they acknowledged his leadership. When, finally, the ship went to pieces, the soldiers proposed that the prisoners be killed to prevent escape, but the fact that Paul was a prisoner led the centurion to protest. In order to save Paul, he would risk the escape of the others and the punishment that their escape might bring upon him.

THE MAN OF FAITH ALWAYS A LEADER

It is a great thing to be the companion of such a man as Paul. God not only watched over Paul, but He watched over those with him. Taking God boldly at his word, Paul promised all on the ship that not a "hair would fall from the head of any of them." The man who relies upon himself is very weak in the hour of danger; the man who relies upon any companion like himself is fearful. But they could rely upon Paul because he relied upon God!

An old adage declares that darkness brings out the stars; and is it not true? In every great emergency some one appears, some one who believes in God. A man always worships the highest being he knows. If he does not believe in God, he worships himself and therefore has nothing to lean on when he reaches the limitations of his strength. The atheist is helpless; the agnostic is confused; only those who trust in God are confident. They are confident because they put their faith in the Almighty.

Ingersoll's doctrine, "I do not know," was good enough for him when he was on the lecture platform, convulsing an audience with his humor, but his agnosticism would not serve him in the presence of a dead brother. Then only "hope sees a star," and then only "listening love can hear the rustle of a wing."

It was a calm, God-fearing Lincoln to whom the North looked when the Union was in danger, and the South put its trust in leaders equally devout.

It was Foch, a believer in God, whom the Allies chose to lead the united armies in the world's greatest war.

Crises less important have revealed leaders less prominent, but some man always measures up to the requirements of the occasion, and he is a man of faith.

THE PROTECTING POWER OF RIGHT COMPANIONSHIP

It is not out of place to emphasize the importance of choosing the right kind of companionship. In Paul's case, the sailors and prisoners came without their own volition within the charmed influence of the great Apostle, but the protecting power that he had over them ought to suggest to us the wisdom of allying ourselves with the good rather than with the wicked. Many a young man has been led into vice and crime by an evil companion; nearly every first departure is due to the influence of bad associates. On the other hand, good playmates, good friends, and good business associates are a constant source of strength.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

The Bible gives us numerous instances of people being won to God by the faith of His followers. Many a young man has been brought back to the Church by the patient, steadfast faith of a father or mother. The prodigal son came back to a father—more have come back

to a mother after they have learned how little of real satisfaction the lust of the flesh can yield.

It was Christianity manifested in human life that brought Romanes back from agnosticism to a belief in God and Christ. The sceptic can scoff at creeds and make fun of sermons, but he cannot answer a Christian life.

"Where is my wandering boy tonight" presents an appeal to the heart that silences the unbeliever, because it is an expression of faith.

Christ magnifies the example: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

THE NEED OF FAITH EVERY DAY

Faith is the most impressive characteristic that man can manifest, and the outstanding thought of today's Talk is found in the boldness of a man who backs up against the promises of God and borrows strength from that infinite source of strength. Dangers do not disturb him; his courage makes him calm; others recognize and trust his leadership, and he saves those given into his keeping.

The Christian of today may not behold, as Paul did, the messenger from heaven; he may not, as Paul did, hear the voice of an angel. But in prayer he can approach the throne with a heart open to divine suggestion; he can receive strength, and that strength can give him an acknowledged leadership, and that leadership can bless others as well as himself.

Paul's life is one of the greatest lessons in faith, and the strength and confidence that springs therefrom, that the Bible gives us. We need it every day, that we, too, may be strong for the tasks that confront us—for the leadership which the world never needed more than now, and which is impossible without the completeness of faith that Paul manifested.

THE CHRISTIAN COURAGEOUS AND UNASHAMED

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR DEC. 4

(Acts 28:1-16.)

And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

Howbeit they looked, when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux, to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

So when this was done others also, which had diseases in the island, came and were healed:

Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium; and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

Where we found brethren and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and the three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

It is A. D. 63, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-eight years ago. Nero is seated on the throne of the Caesars. And approaching Rome along the Appian Way of the imperial conquerors comes one of the greatest men the world's most famous city has ever received in all its long and fateful career, reaching back to the first dim days of history.

A prisoner he comes, claiming his right as a Roman citizen to appeal unto Caesar from his accusers in Asia.

And through what has he come to his trial! He has been stormed-tossed and shipwrecked. He has been cast on an island, the Malta of today. He has been bitten by a viper while aid-